

From: David Fry <DavidF@cefni.co.uk>
Sent: 23 July 2026 15:11
To: +Comm Public Accounts Public Email
Subject: Re: Correspondence from the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee

Hi Yannie

Many thanks for the invitation to comment on the below and attached.

Given our role on behalf of the construction industry, we will steer our brief comments around the focus in the Energy Strategy on domestic energy efficiency.

While we acknowledge that a consultation is shortly forthcoming on the scheme design and funding options for such a programme, it is of significant disappointment to us that nearly five years on from the publication of the Energy Strategy we still don't have a retrofit scheme in place for the bulk of households.

It is of course important to acknowledge that such a scheme will have a large element of its focus on new and emerging technologies - such as heat pumps - and that even as recently as 2021 it may not have been completely clear how big a role such technologies would play in any retrofit scheme and/or there may be other policy options which have in the meantime fallen by the wayside - e.g. the potential use of hydrogen for home heating boilers.

However, the critical focus of any home retrofit scheme must be a fabric first approach. This would have been clear at the time of the publication of the strategy in 2021 and, indeed, for many years previous. Therefore, and given the impact that our existing domestic housing stock has on our emissions, it should have been possible to bring forward a retrofit scheme at an earlier stage than, likely, mid-2027 which focused on a fabric first approach. We have consequently wasted a number of years in not meaningfully altering housing emissions with the availability of relatively low-cost upgrade options that would have a level of state support in such a scheme - for example, loft and cavity wall insulation.

The ongoing DfC consultation on the Warm Healthy Homes Fund will almost certainly be the template for the wider domestic retrofit scheme. Northern Ireland has a significant amount of catching up to do when compared with the level of retrofit underway in other jurisdictions and we would urge the Committee to encourage the Department to bring forward the consultation on a wider retrofit scheme as soon as possible.

Linked to this, it will be vital - both from a point of view of consumer confidence as well as that of the construction industry - that the consultation provides a clear understanding of the level and type of support (e.g. loans, grants) that will be available to households. We have little if any foresight on the level of funding that will be available and have concerns as to how, given wider public expenditure challenges, such a scheme can make a meaningful difference unless the quantum of funding available is huge in scale. While the Warm Healthy Homes Fund proposed funding envelope is welcome, and rightly targeted at those on the lowest incomes, it strikes us as a relatively modest investment given the level of challenge we face in making our existing housing stock fit for the future. Should the wider household scheme be as limited in nature financially, then it will likely make a limited impact than otherwise possible.

The introduction of such a scheme will also act as the major stimulant towards the advancement of green skills within the construction industry. While it is undoubted that contractors and homebuilders have seen their skills profiles begin to change and adapt in recent years, it is only with the confidence of a major government retrofit scheme that the industry will fully embrace the green skills opportunities that will present themselves. This, therefore, is a further major reason why any such retrofit scheme has to be backed up by significant financial investment on the part of DfE, the wider Executive and other potential funders and funding arrangements.

As a sector, we remain supportive of the pathway of uplifts in building regulations for our newbuild housing. However, it remains crucial that a domestic retrofit scheme is prioritised as the key way in which we deal with emissions from domestic housing. Even if we no further uplifted building regulations for new builds than they stand today, it would remain the case that anything built over the last 15-20 years is significantly more energy efficient than the bulk of our housing stock which, in many cases, dates from the early 20th century to the post-war period. As we develop a domestic retrofit scheme, it is important that investment is targeted where it can make the greatest impact.

We would be happy to discuss any of this with the Committee further.

Best wishes
David



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From: +Comm Public Accounts Public Email <committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk>
Sent: 07 July 2026 16:02
Cc: +Comm Public Accounts Public Email <committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk>
Subject: Correspondence from the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee

This Message originated outside your organization.

Good afternoon,

Please find attached correspondence from the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee.

We encourage you to share the attached to any businesses within the sector you feel would be relevant to this inquiry.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us on

committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk

Kind regards,
Yannie

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